

Errata

for

May 2016 Environmental Assessment

Improve Visitor Services at Bear Paw Battlefield

The May 2016 EA prepared for the proposed improvement of visitor services at Bear Paw Battlefield provides a synopsis of public and agency responses to the original 2009 EA which were received by the NPS (May 2016 EA, page 11). This *Errata* has been prepared to provide a complete summary of all the public comments.

1. 40 comment letters or e-mails were received within the comment period which extended from March – June, 2009. Several individuals sent their comments in both letter and e-mail format. Since these comments were identical, and from the same recipient, they were tallied as one concern statement. In addition, one commenter submitted comments in favor of one alternative and then followed several weeks later with an additional comment favoring a different alternative. One comment was received approximately 3 weeks after the comment period ended, but it has been included here too.
2. Of the 40 comment letters 13 were from other Federal, State, Local or Tribal agencies and/or groups. The remaining 27 were from interested citizens.

Alternatives from the 2009 EA selected by commenter

- a) 1 commenter was in favor of Alternative 1 (no action) – (Note: The same commenter submitted a second letter two-weeks later favoring option “d” below. The commenter never indicated which letter voiced his preferred stance on the subject so we will include both here.)
- b) 5 of those who commented were in favor of Alternative 3 which is the preferred alternative.
- c) 8 of those who commented were in favor of Alternative 4 which calls for an on-site facility.
- d) 23 of those who commented selected no alternative from the 2009 EA to support, but were in favor of some form of visitor facility on or immediately adjacent to the Battlefield.
- e) 1 commenter favored an “off-site memorial.”
- f) 2 comments exhibited no preference.

Discussion:

This can be further refined by separating the agency/groups from the interested citizen comments. Of the 13 comment letters received from partner groups and agencies,

- 3 were in favor of Alternative 3,
- 2 in favor of Alternative 4,

- 7 selected no alternative but supported some form of visitor facility at the site, and
- 1 exhibited no preference.

Of the 27 comment letters received from interested citizens,

- 1 was in favor of Alternative 1,
- 2 were in favor of Alternative 3,
- 6 were in favor of Alternative 4,
- 16 selected no specific alternative but supported some form of visitor facility at the site,
- 1 preferred an “off-site memorial”, and
- 1 exhibited no preference.

Comments directed at Alternative 3 (preferred alternative)

Comments directed in opposition:

- a) 8 of those who commented felt this alternative would not result in an increase in visitation to the battlefield or the community.
- b) 6 of those who commented felt the facility proposed for Chinook under this alternative would duplicate services with the Blaine County Museum.
- c) 6 of those who commented felt this alternative would not allow for a complete or accurate telling of the Nez Perce Story and history of the site/battle.
- d) 4 expressed the feelings that this alternative would do nothing to improve the visitor experience at the battlefield nor would it improve the viewshed as the vault toilets and picnic structure would be only relocated and not removed from the battlefield.
- e) 2 of those who commented felt this alternative would cause confusion to visitors over which facility in Chinook to visit.
- f) 2 of those who commented felt this option is the same as “doing nothing” or was a “cheap way of doing something” at the battlefield.
- g) 1 commenter felt that this alternative would result in a net loss of visitor services for the Bear Paw site as there would be no NPS staff increases over current, yet a reduction in funding to the Blaine County Museum would result in less open hours and visitor contact time in that facility.
- h) 1 commenter felt this alternative does not make financial sense.
- i) 1 commenter felt this alternative would split what little staff the NPS does have between two locations making them less available to visitors.

Comments directed in support:

- j) 3 of those who commented felt this alternative was the “most appropriate” or “best management choice” for the Bear Paw site.
- k) 1 commenter felt this alternative would provide financial benefit to the city of Chinook.

Comments directed at Alternative 4 (on-site facility) or for some form of visitor facility at or near the site

Comments directed in opposition:

- a) 1 commenter felt that an on-site facility was just not feasible in the current economic environment.
- b) 1 commenter felt the costs for maintaining a year-round facility on site would be expensive and the limited funds available would be better used to support and augment existing battlefield displays.

Comments directed in support:

- c) Everyone who commented in favor of this alternative (8 total), or some form of a visitor center at the battlefield (23 total), felt this would allow for a complete and accurate telling of the events of the Bear Paw Battle and this could not be accomplished off site.
- d) 9 of those who commented felt this alternative would result in increased amounts of visitors to the site and help the economy of the area.
- e) 7 of those who commented compared this site to Big Hole National Battlefield and felt a similar structure was needed at Bear Paw to recognize the historical significance of the site.
- f) 4 of those who commented felt this alternative was needed to provide basic comforts to visitors including flush toilets, running water, telephone access, safety and shelter from the weather.
- g) 3 of those who commented felt this alternative would provide for increased resource protection and security at the battlefield over that provided in alternative 3.
- h) 3 of those who commented disagreed with the NPS and felt this alternative could/would benefit the viewshed as it would remove the existing facilities from the battlefield and potentially place an on-site facility out of view, with careful planning and landscape design.

Comments directed at other issues involving the EA or site management

- a) 1 commenter felt the NPS should install signage along Highway 2 as you approach Chinook from the west and east.
- b) 1 commenter felt the NPS and Federal government needs to be honoring the 21 Medal of Honor recipients who fought at the battle.
- c) 1 commenter felt the NPS should plan for the development of a future campground in the nearby community of Cleveland.
- d) 1 commenter felt the NPS was ignoring the "external" customers and focusing too much on the "internal" customer.
- e) 1 commenter felt the government needs to stop "throwing money at problems" and that this project is an opportunity to preserve and promote an important part of our history.
- f) 1 commenter felt the NPS needs to better engage the other associated tribal groups in the area in regards to planning interpretation and education programs at the Bear Paw site.
- g) 1 commenter was willing to do an easement on his property for a visitor facility that is adjacent to the NPS land and with "some negotiating" would be willing to even build a facility to rent back to the NPS.
- h) 1 commenter offered his services to provide "historical interpretation" at the facility once the NPS constructs it.

- i) 1 commenter feels the NPS has not properly pursued all options of placing a VC on neighboring privately owned lands.
- j) 1 commenter feels the NPS should facilitate a meeting between the leaders of the tribes and the leaders of the Chinook community and the local historical society.
- k) 1 commenter feels the 2009 EA is "seriously flawed and lacks common sense" and feels the idea that "Bear Paw Battlefield is on par with the other 37 sites of Nez Perce National Historical Park is ridiculous and lacks common sense."
- l) 2 of those who commented stated that the NPS disregarded a 2001 draft document and feels alternative #6, as presented in that document, should be reconsidered here.
- m) 1 commenter felt that a thorough visual analysis is needed along with additional archaeological evaluation for each ground disturbing alternative presented in the EA.
- n) 2 of those who commented felt the NPS has not communicated with all parties, especially the local groups, and the NPS has focused too heavily on the "Nez Perce governmental agencies."
- o) 1 commenter provided some recommendations to the NPS for changes in terminology for the Indian trust resources and ethnographic resources and sacred sites sections of the EA.